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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003571

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER PGOV PREL KISL PINR IZ

SUBJECT: KARBALA: MUQTADA AL-SADR PREACHES PATIENCE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3561

¶B. BAGHDAD 3503

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Don Cooke for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Karbala Reporting Cable

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The PRT recently obtained a half-page flyer from Muqtada al-Sadr that was being distributed near the al-Husayn and al-Abbas shrines in Karbala. In the half-page, photocopied message, Muqtada urges his followers to "practice calmness with the government -- but not with the occupiers." Its tone is markedly less confrontational than that contained in a letter from Muqtada intercepted in October by British Forces near al-Faw (ref B). The PRT's translation of the flyer follows. A scan of the original has been sent to the Embassy's Political Section. End Summary.

Translation of Text

¶2. (U) "To the Mujahideen Among the Sadr Followers, Followers of the Spoken Hawza: I advised you in my previous statements to exercise patience and follow the orders of the Spoken Hawza. I also advised you to stand facing the attacks of the invaders and their proxies, who are carrying out their wicked plans to get rid of the followers of the Honorable Line. The latest incidents in Basrah, Kut and Sadr City prove that the Iraqi Government, with the cooperation of the invading forces, is proceeding with its wicked plans. These coincide with the coming elections and are intended to defame the reputation of the mujahideen, who continue breathing the sacred, pure spirit of the Holy Master" (Muqtada's father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, who was assassinated in Najaf in 1999). "This spirit hovers over the provinces where the mujahideen among the Sadr followers are arrested, killed and displaced."

¶3. (U) "What is happening today violates the cease-fire that we initiated by freezing Mahdi Army activities. These events are aimed at depleting the resources, spiritual and material, of the Mahdi Army. They will lead some of our followers to desert us and stand against us, and the other Shi'as to view us negatively. We found that in order to protect the Sadr Movement we have to be patient; the occupiers are still on our land. The incidents at Diwaniyah and Karbala dealt us severe setbacks. They led us to conclude that further confrontations would give the government a green light to use force and attacks the Sadrists in Basrah and in Sadr City. This is what the occupiers actually want."

¶4. (U) "As I tell you this, I feel bitterness and sorrow that some among us are not following orders. Although they identify themselves as members of the Mahdi Army, they in fact are supporting the government and the occupiers. We appeal to the Sadrists to practice calmness with the government -- but not with the occupiers -- and thereby to benefit from the amnesty the government recently declared. I ask you to put down your weapons and follow the order to freeze activities and not to stand against the Spoken Hawza. Stand by God who supports you and will lead you to victory! Muqtada al-Sadr, 18 Rabi' al-Awal 1429" (October 18, 2008).

Comment

¶5. (C) The resigned tone of this message mirrors that in another document we obtained detailing the Sadrist agenda for Karbala (ref A). Karbala's new Iraqi Army commander, BG Ali Musari al-Gileri, told visiting Senior Advisor Gordon Gray on November 3 that three local youths paid to distribute copies of this flyer had been arrested. End comment.

CROCKER